Revised Synopsis

A STUDY ON RELATIONSHIP OF ELECTRONIC WORD OF MOUTH AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR WITH REFERENCE TO TRAVEL INDUSTRY

Synopsis of research work

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"A traveler without knowledge is like the bird without wings" - Sa'di, Gulistan (1258)

1. Introduction

Consumer behavior is defined as the behavior displayed by consumer in searching, purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing off products or services that they expect will satisfy their needs. It focuses on how individuals make decision to spend their available resources like time, money and effort for meeting their needs. American Marketing Association (1995) defined consumer behavior as, "The dynamic interaction of affect and cognition, behaviour and the environment by which human beings conduct the exchange aspects of their lives."

Consumer behaviour has two aspects: The final purchase activity which is visible to us and the decision process which may involve the interplay of a number of complex variables not visible to us. In fact, purchase behaviour is the end result of a long process of consumer decision making. This process of consumer decision making can be influenced by promotional activities of marketers and consumers word of mouth (WOM), also named as free advertising by Buttle (1998). When consumer shares the information regarding the product they have used or intend to use, they enter into a conversation among them, called as WOM communication. WOM is found to play important role in product adoption process (Bass, Krishnan, & Jain, 1994).

The traditional word of mouth when expressed through internet on online platforms is known as Electronic Word of Mouth (eWOM). eWOM is defined as "any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the internet" (Henning-Thurau, Gwinne, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). eWOM is considered to be an important factor in shaping consumer purchase

behavior (Cheung & Lee, 2012). The researchers have also found it to be a very important source of feedback for company to improve their product/ service and brand image.

The study of eWOM has gained high importance in today's internet driven business scenario. Consumers are knowledgeable and do not fear to express themselves on online platforms. eWOM is measurable and hence is considered to be more credible than traditional word of mouth (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Among various platforms used by consumers to express themselves on the internet like discussion forums, review websites, retail websites, e-bulletin board systems, newsgroups and social networking sites etc.; information provided by consumerreviews is found to be more influential among consumer's (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004). Consumer reviews are considered to be more influential than other types of eWOM because a consumer can write review only if he had purchased the product, while in other platforms he may give his opinion without purchasing the product. Consumer reviews are considered to be highly recommendable by large number of researchers in their study (Cheung & Lee, 2012; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004; Kleinberg, 2009; Park & Kim, 2008; Shahana & Lerman, 2008).

Industrial statistics have also provided evidence in supporting the significant impact of consumer reviews in decision making. Market survey company eMarketers revealed that 61% of consumers consulted online reviews, blogs and other kinds of online customer feedback before purchasing a new product or service. According to Nielsen Global Trust in Advertising Survey -Q3 2011, 70 % consumers accepted that they trust consumer opinions posted online for making purchase.

The researcher proposes to study how consumer opinion expressed on eTravel websites affects consumers purchase behavior. Consumer decision making process begins with need identification. Consumer feels a need to book a hotel room in a particular area for some purpose. He searches for room availability through eTravel websites and reads the hotel reviews posted on these websites to finalise and book the hotel that meets his requirements. This process of consumer decision making is depicted in Figure 1.

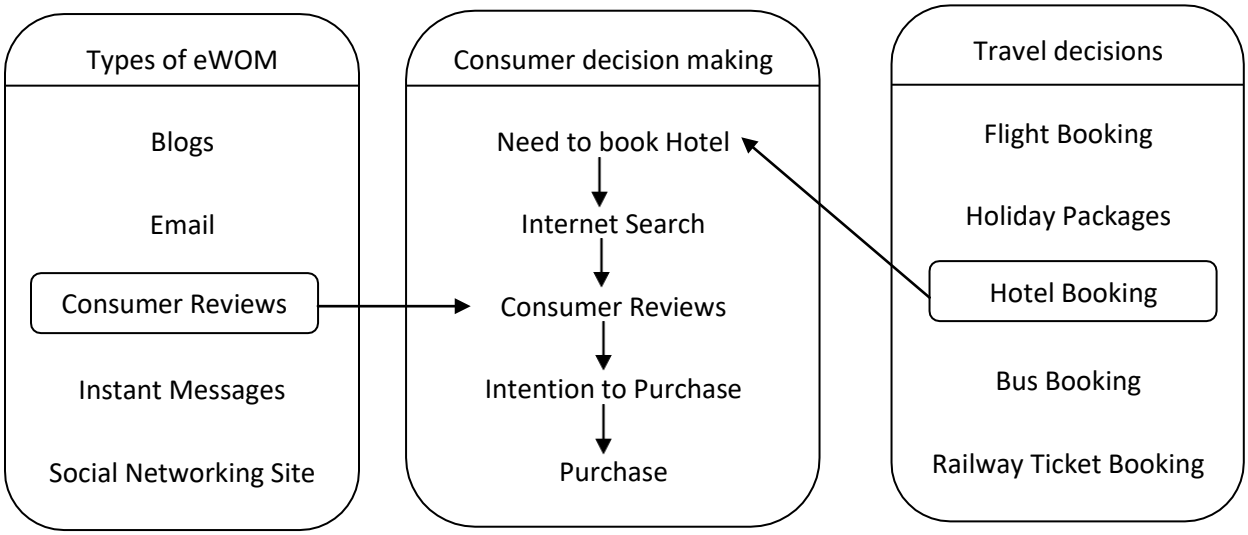

Figure1. Use of consumer reviews in travel decision making

As highlighted by previous studies and market research, consumer reviews play a vital role in consumer decision making. This research shall study consumer reviews posted on eTravel websites as eWOM. There are several decisions to be made during travel, including booking of hotel. The researcher intent to study the impact of consumer reviews posted on online platforms on consumer's behaviour towards online booking of hotel. Consumer reviews for booking of hotel are considered to be very crucial as once hotel is booked and consumer uses it; it cannot be returned or exchanged, thereby increasing the amount of risk involved.

2. Industry Profile

2.1. Internet in India

A study jointly conducted by Internet and Mobile Association of India and Indian Market Research Bureau (2015) reported that internet users in India were expected to reach 402 million by December 2015, registering a growth of 49% over the previous year. As forecasted India will soon overtake US and become the second largest internet user's base in the world behind China although India is ranked first and constitutes of largest internet users in a free market democratic setup.

2.2 Travel Industry in India

India is an attractive tourist destination around the world. India is known for its cultural heritage and is home to one of the wonders of the world, The Taj Mahal. There is an increasing trend in booking of travel through internet. According to IAMAI 2015 Digital Commerce Report, online travel business is worth $8.2 billion and constitutes about 61.4 % of the total online business in India. Google India and IPG Media Brands have come together with travel industry to boost online holiday bookings in India to host Great Indian Travel Festival (GITF). This festival was organized online from April 18 to 26, 2015 and offered users great deals on travel and hotel stay packages covering more than 50 holiday destinations both within and outside India. This online festival was participated by eTravel websites like Cleartrip, MakeMyTrip and Yatra etc ; holiday players like Thomas Cook , Cox & Kings and Goibibo etc; airlines such as Indigo, Jet Airways, Spicejet and British Airways etc ; startups like Zo rooms and Oyo rooms. The GITF also featured offers from luxury hotels like The Leela Palace, Hyatt and ITC Hotels etc.

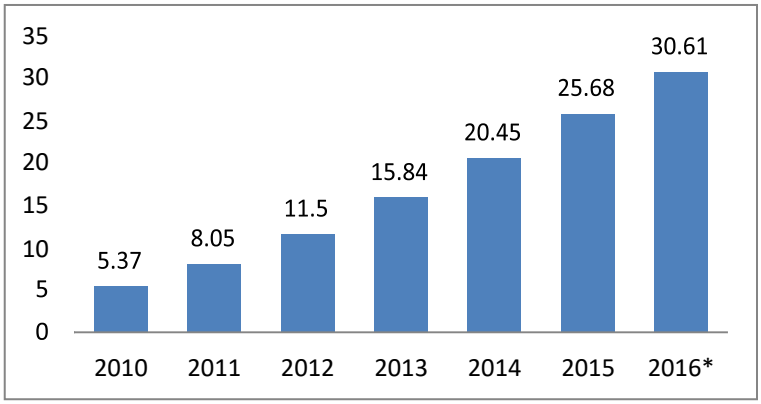

Figure 2: Forecasted online travel sales volume in India in US Billion Dollar *(Source: http://www.statista.com/statistics/249705/forecast-of-online-travel-sales-volume-in-india)*

The travel industry in India is growing at rate of approximately 20% per year and new initiatives by such companies can boost online holiday sector growth. Statista reported growth of online travel sales volume in India to be $30.61 billion in 2016 rising from $5.37 billion in 2010.

3. Review of Literature

This section covers the brief summary of literature on the topic. The section is divided into three subsections, the conceptual coverage of literature, literature map and synthesised literature review. The literature review is covered from three aspects- constructs under study, area of eWOM and methodology used.

Word of mouth (WOM) has always been a topic of interest for the researchers. Researchers have been analyzing the WOM communication for over a period of 2400 years (Buttle, 1998). Since eWOM is a relatively new area of research, the literature available is very vast and incoherent. The searches on eWOM and related topics produced 390 studies (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). The scope of the published studies on impact of WOM communication is broad and the studies appear relatively fragmented and inconclusive (Cheung & Thadani, 2010). Researchers in recent years have contributed to bring eWOM literature into a summarized and meaningful form. (Amaro & Duarte, 2015; Breazeale, 2009; Berger, 2014; Buttle,1998; Cheung & Thadani, 2012; King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). Literature on the topic is very wide spread, therefore the researcher will be using concept driven systematic review methodology as defined by (Webster & Watson, 2002). This type of approach will help the researcher to organize the literature on various concepts presented by different authors.

Arndt (1967) was one of the earliest researchers to study the influence of WOM on consumer behaviour. He defined WOM as “oral, person-to-person communication between a receiver and a communicator whom the receiver perceives as non-commercial, regarding a brand, product or service”. In simple words, WOM is the communication among consumers about a product, service, or a company in which the sources are considered independent of commercial influence. The researchers have found that the word of mouth is frequent and important, but little is known about its principal behavior process (Berger, 2014).

WOM is considered to be highly credible form of marketing information (Hung & Li, 2007). WOM is believed to be uttered by sources that are assumed by receivers to be independent of corporate influence (Buttle, 1998). Word of mouth plays an important role in reducing risk and uncertainty in purchase and consumption (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

The advancement of internet based communications on various platforms has multiplied the diffusion of information in comparison to traditional word of mouth (Lis & Nebler, 2014). Lee and Lee (2009) examined the impact of eWOM on customer purchase intention to determine the effect of product information on the customers' online purchasing process. Consumers evaluate product information present in consumer reviews to help fulfill their consumption goals (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010).

Tourism is majorly a service oriented sector. Service intangibility and the potential for heterogeneous performance drive WOM seeking (Buttle, 1998) which in turn has raised attention towards eWOM in the hospitality sector (Litvin et al., 2008; Sparks & Browning, 2011; Ye et al., 2009). Today, the Tourists are more informed, demanding and searching for unique experiences. Word of mouth or simply interpersonal communications between tourists and their peers, have been recognized as influential for shaping tourism demand (Lopes, Jose Luis, & Elisabeth, 2014). Ye Q., Law, Gu and Chen (2011) used regression estimates and found that a ten percent increase in the ratings of user reviews can boost the index of online hotel bookings, by more than five percent. Therefore eTravel websites need to improve their marketing strategy, especially their relationships with actual and potential customers, in order to exceed tourists' expectations, instead of simply providing a satisfactory service (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008; Lopes et al., 2014).

eWOM in service context is perceived highly valuable by consumers (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Interpersonal influence and WOM are ranked the most important information source when a consumer is making a purchase decision especially in the hospitality and tourism industry, whose intangible products are difficult to evaluate prior to their consumption (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008).

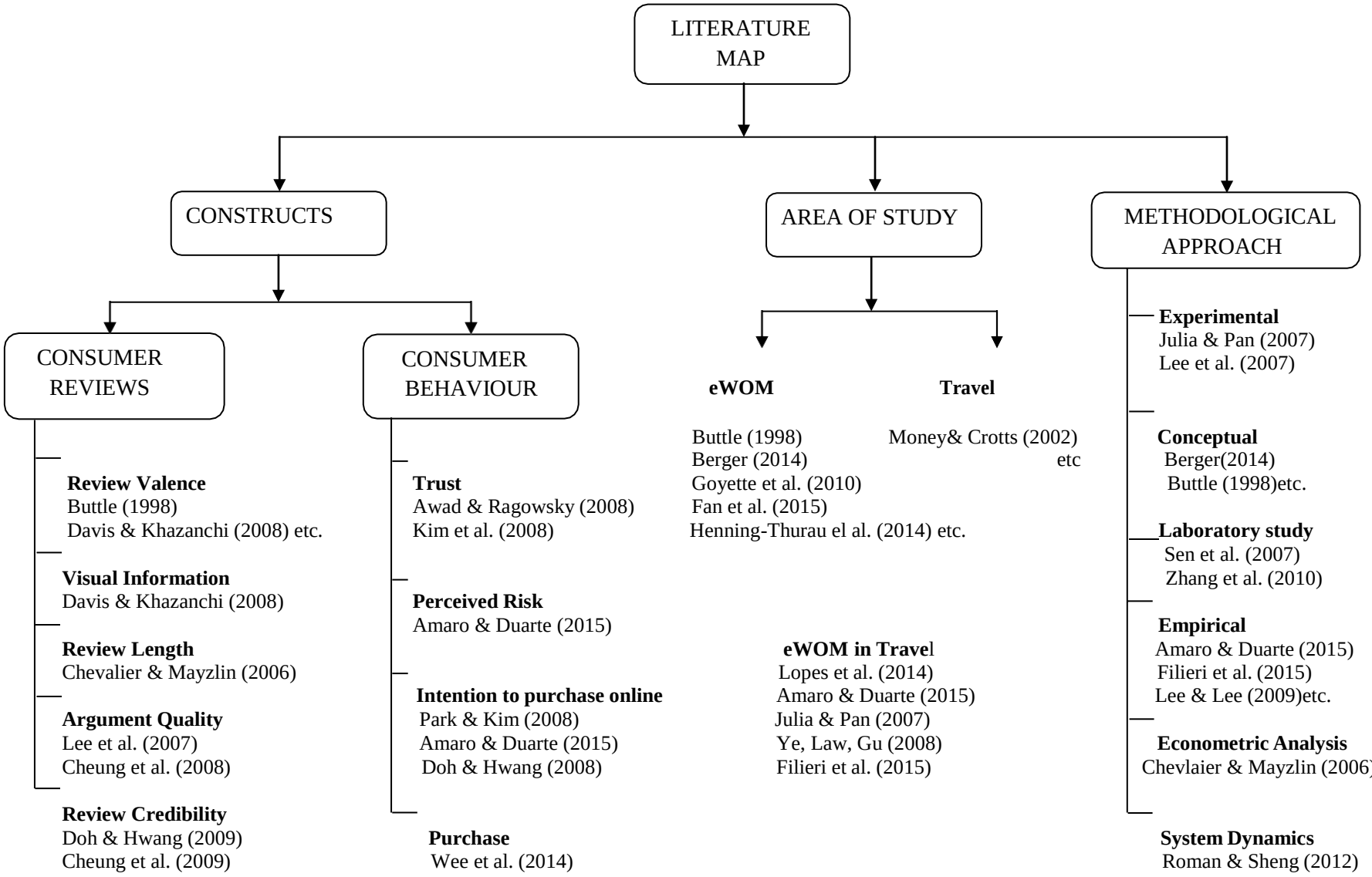

Figure 3: Snapshot of Literature Review

3.1 Area of Study

The literature area of eWOM can be broadly summarised into three areas. Studies in the field of eWOM, studies related to the Travel and studies considering both.

Buttle (1998) presented a comprehensive literature review and did a comparative study of traditional WOM and eWOM while literature was summarised into antecedents and consequences to senders and receivers by King, Racherla, and Bush (2014). Henning-Thurau et al. (2004) pioneered the research in eWOM by studying web based consumer opinion platforms and analysed the motives behind spreading eWOM. Impact of eWOM was studied by Cheung et al. (2008) to analyse to what extent the consumers are willing to accept and adopt online consumer reviews.

The researchers have also identified WOM to play important role in buying process. eWOM provides product information from user perspective in each stage (Park & Kim, 2008). Impact of Blogs in tourism was found to be less credible than traditional WOM (Mack, Blose, & Pan, 2008) but WOM on microblogging site Twitter was found to significantly impact the brand choice (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009). Davis and Khazanchi (2008) conducted emperical studies and developed a model on attributes of online WOM that can be used to predict e-commerce sales.

Previous researches have shown that there is a high level of consumer acceptance and reliance on online WOM (Henning-Thurau & Walsh, 2004) and that online WOM can increase product sales (Chen et al., 2004; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Davis & Khazanchi, 2007; Liu, 2006). The researchers have found that a traveler will write a review on the same website where the hotel reservation was made (Lopes, Jose Luis, & Elisabeth, 2014) thereby increasing the value of consumer reviews.

Few gaps were identified based on the extensive literature review. Despite enormous amount of literature available on eWOM, research is needed to understand how moderators like reviewer characteristics, type of website may influence the impact of online reviews on evaluations (Purnawirawan, Eisend, De Pelsmacker, & Dens, 2015). The marketers provide an option of posting

photo/video in the consumer review but this area is found to be understudied (King, Racherla, & Bush, 2014). Relationship between intentions to purchase travel online and actual behaviour has never been examined in the travel context (Amaro & Duarte, 2015).

3.2 Review Characteristics & Consumer Behaviour in Electronic Platform

3.2.1 Review Valence

Valence is the message idea that WOM can be either positive or negative (Buttle,1998). Zhang et al.(2010) conducted econometric analysis to find the effect of review valence on the product sales and when these reviews are adopted by consumers. Doh and Hwan (2008) studied the negativity effect of consumer reviews. Purnawiran et al. (2015) conducted a meta analysis and found significant impact of review valence on purchase intention and review credibility where as Davis and Khazanchi (2008) found that valence does not affect product sales.

3.2.2 Visual Information

Consumers have found to develop certain motives for reading consumer reviews before purchasing of a product (Wong & Sheng, 2012). Davis and Khazanchi (2008) conducted a market level study on visual eWOM to predict sales. The need for study on visual eWOM was recognised by King, Racherla, & Bush (2014).

3.2.3 Argument Quality

Cheung et al. (2008) studied effect of argument quality on information adoption by consumers in online consumer communities. The quality of eWOM was found to be the most significant factor, positively affecting the perceived credibility of source (Fan et al., 2013).

3.2.4 Review Length

Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) found that the length of reviews improve the credibility of eWOM and therefore lead to high impact on consumers intention to purchase online. They found that of eWOM positively affects sales of books, by analysing book reviews on e-commerce website Amazon.

3.2.5 Review Credibility

Cheung, Luo, Sia, and Chen (2009) used Dual Process Theory to study the effect of informational determinants and normative determinants on eWOM credibility. Elaboration Likelihood Model was used by Fan et al. (2013) to study the importance review credibility.

3.2.6 Intention to Purchase Online

Amaro and Duarte (2015) conducted a study of eWOM variables on consumer purchase intention towards booking of online travel. Vermeulen and Seegers (2008) found that exposure to online reviews enhances hotel consideration among consumers. They found that positive reviews have a positive impact on consumer behavior, whereas negative reviews were found to have little impact.

3.2.7 Purchase

The variable purchase has not been studied in eWOM and travel context together (Amaro & Duarte, 2015). A study to understand purchase behaviour of consumers in buying of organic food was measured based on Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen,2011) in their study by Wee et al. (2014).

3.2.8 Trust

Awad and Ragowsky (2008) found that cultural and gender differences influences trust among consumers in e-commerce while considering eWOM. Filieri et al. (2013) studied trust in context of consumers trust towards consumer generated media and how it influences travel decision.

3.2.9 Perceived Risk

Amaro and Duarte (2015) found that perceived risk plays an important role in purchasing travel online. Consumers risk of trusting the website and revealing payment details are significantly found to affect consumers intention to purchase online.

3.3 Methodological Approach

Studies on WOM are vast and fragmented (Cheung & Lee, 2012). Researchers conducted different types of studies to add meaning to eWOM literature.

Experimental studies were conducted by several researchers to study eWOM. Julia and Pan (2007) studied eWOM and found it to be less credible than traditional WOM in travel context. Lee, Park and Han (2007) studied consumer reviews to see effects of negative online consumer reviews on consumer's product attitude using Estimation Likelihood Model. Cognitive Fit theory and ELM was used by Park and Kim (2008) to analyse that type of reviews can act as moderating variable to explain the inconsistent relationship between consumer expertise and WOM. Other researchers to conduct experimental studies on eWOM were Purnaviran et al. (2015) , Vermuleaun and Seagers (2008).

Several **conceptual studies** have contributed in analysing and giving directions to the study of eWOM. Lopes et al.(2014) studied importance of eWOM in travel context using Dual Process Theory to study when , where and why tourists write reviews. Litvin et al. (2008) presented eWOM as a cost effective method for marketing hospitality and tourism.

Empirical studies have contributed largely to eWOM literature. Customer word of mouth is found to affect consumer purchasing behavior (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Doh & Hwan,2009; Jansane et al., 2009; Lee & Lee, 2009).

Zhang et al. (2010) conducted **Laboratory studies** using Regulatory Focus Theory to find why consumers consider eWOM in their purchase decision. Sen and Lerman (2007) studied impact of eWOM on utilitarian and hedonic products separately.

Econometric Analysis was done by Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) and significant effect of consumer reviews was found on consumer behaviour.

System dynamics modeling approach was used to study the dynamics of complex system of WOM by Wong and Sheng (2012). They emphasized that word of mouth is not just a communication between sender and receiver; rather there exists a recursive relationship between consumers' buying decisions and their word-of-mouth activity decisions.

The entire summary of Literature Review is presented in Annexure 1.

4. Need of the Study

Internet has completely changed the way consumer shop. The digital form of WOM or eWOM has obtained a great importance and is considered to be a relative new area of research (Lis & Nebler, 2014). The number of potential users opting for reading consumer reviews before buying any product or service is increasing (Refer Table 1). Thus, there arises the importance of understanding the behavior of a consumer in online platforms. India is becoming an attractive market for purchase of online travel (Refer Figure 2). India is a country with high diversity, so it was interesting to see how consumers will behave in this changing context of eWOM.

Marketers are now recognizing the power of WOM. Companies are deliberately trying to initiate certain WOM activities and to control their contents as far as possible (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). To recognize and harness the power of word of mouth, Word of Mouth Association

(WOMMA) was founded in 2004 which is dedicated to WOM marketing through education, professional development and knowledge sharing with top industry marketers. More than 120 innovative global brands all over world including IBM, Philips, Coca Cola, and Colgate are its members. Therefore, WOM has achieved a significance importance in today's world more than ever imagined.

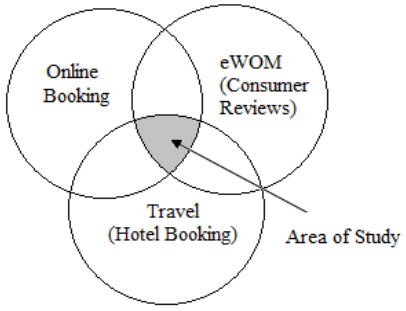

Figure 4. Area of study

For the purpose of study we have selected online travel booking which is a service based industry. The services do not have the 'try before you buy' or 'return in case quality is below expectations' option, therefore more and more consumers are relying heavily on online reviews to evaluate services prior to purchase (Senecal & Nantel, 2004). Travel industry deals with intangible which cannot be evaluated before consumption thus, elevating the importance of interpersonal influence (Lewis & Chamber, 2000). Also it has been found that consumers prefer online purchase over offline purchase when it comes to booking an airline, train, bus and hotel accommodation (etravelIndia, January 2015).

The data collected by Static Brain Research Institute (Refer Table 1) shows that there were 148.3 million number of online travel booking in 2012. Out of these bookings 57% of total reservations were made using internet. In terms of revenue, the largest share amounting to 39% of travel booking was constituted by hotel bookings. The table represents that 81% of travelers find user reviews important and there are 49 % travelers who don't book a hotel without reading the reviews.

Table 1. Internet travel hotel booking statistics

Online travel Booking Statistics (2012)	**Data**
Number of travel bookings made on the internet each year	148.3 million
Percent of all travel reservations made using internet	57 %
Online Travel Sales Revenue Breakup(Q1 2012)	**Data**
Hotel Reservations	39%
Air Ticketing	37%
Packaged Tour	17%
Corporate Travel	4%
Others	3%
Travel Booking Site statistics	**Data**
Average number of reviews for a hotel	238
Percent of travelers who find user reviews important	81%
Percent of travelers who won't book a hotel without reviews	49%

Source: http://www.statisticbrain.com/internet-travel-hotel-booking-statistics/

These interesting data facts gathered from market and increasing amount of literature in eWOM study made it an interesting field of study. It was identified that little significant work has been done in Indian context. As reported by IAMAI India ranks second in Internet usage, the need to study consumers buying behaviour using internet becomes important. In recent years so many e- travel booking websites have been launched in India facilitating the consumer to book hotels online.

Table 2. Emerging eTravel websites in India

eTravel websites	**Launch Year**	**Headquarter**	**Affiliated Hotels**	**Weblink**
MakeMyTrip	2000	Gurgaon	105,000+	http://www.makemytrip.com/
Yatra	2006	Gurgaon	Not available	http://www.yatra.com/
Cleartrip	2006	Mumbai	271,000 +	http://www.cleartrip.com/
Goibibo	2009	Gurgaon	Not available	http://www.goibibo.com/

Source: Homepage of websites

With the launch of these companies, the not so popular hotels have also got an opportunity to be listed and booked. Therefore the reviews posted by consumers on such platforms can highly influence the sales. In such a scenario where India is becoming an attractive tourist destination, people are turning towards internet for opinion seeking and purchasing; it becomes more interesting for marketers and academicians to understand the consumer behaviour.

5. Objectives of Study

The proposed study has following objectives:

Objective 1: To evaluate the impact of consumer review characteristics on review credibility.

Here we propose to evaluate the impact of consumer review characteristics namely, review valence, visual information, review length and argument quality on review credibility.

Objective 2: To evaluate the impact of consumer reviews on consumer behaviour.

Here we propose to evaluate the impact of consumer reviews on consumer behaviour towards online booking of hotels.

Objective 3: To evaluate the moderating effect of consumer's cognitive behaviour on relationship of consumer reviews and consumer behaviour.

We propose to explore how the cognitive behaviour of consumer (Trust and Perceived risk) will affect the relationship of consumer reviews and consumer behaviour.

Objective 4: To evaluate the overall impact of consumer reviews on consumer decision making.

Here we propose to examine consumer's characteristics and relate our analysis to understand how it affects consumer buying behaviour while considering online travel purchase based on consumer reviews.

6. Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The conceptual framework is based on Stimulus-Organism-Response model (Woodworth, 1929). Woodworth introduced O (organism) to the traditional Stimulus-Response (S-R) model as he believed that the stimulus elicits a different response depending on the state of the organism. The organism affects the relationship between the stimulus and the response. In this study consumer reviews posted on eTravel websites are considered to be the stimulus eliciting response on consumer behaviour. Consumer review credibility is affected by the review characteristics, namely, Review Valence, Review Length, Visual Information and Argument Quality. Consumer behaviour is measured here in term of Intention to purchase online and Purchase. The consumer's cognitive behaviour (trust and perceived risk) will be tested for moderation effect on relationship of consumer reviews and consumer behaviour.

6.1 Conceptual Framework

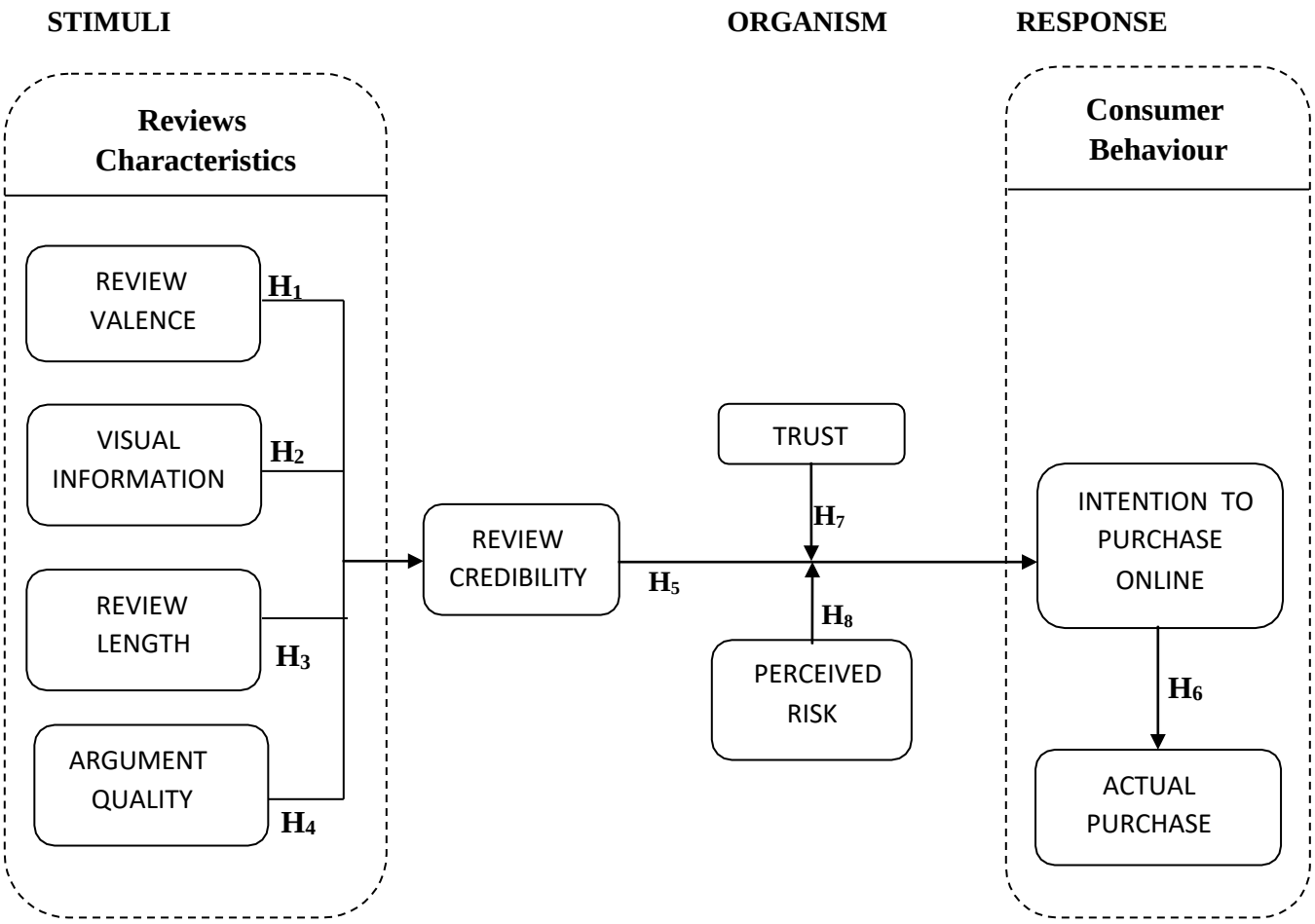

Table 3. Definition of constructs and related studies

Construct	Definition	Studies
Review Valence	Valence of an eWOM is the message that it is positive or negative	Doh & Hwang (2009), Ye-Q et al. (2011), Purnawiran et al. (2015)
Visual Information	Any image, a form of communication posted by a reviewer and directed at other consumers when evaluating the characteristics of a particular good or service	Davis & Khazanchi (2008), Filieri et al.(2015)
Review Length	Total number of characters in a piece of review	Chevalier & Mayzlin (2006), Sen & Lerman (2008), Zhang et a. l(2010)
Argument Quality	It refers to the persuasive strength of arguments embedded in an informational message	Lee, Park, & Han (2007), Cheung, Lee & Rabjohn (2008)
Review Credibility	The perceived ability or motivation for eWOM review to provide accurate and truthful information.	Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen (2009), Doh & Hwang (2009)
Trust	General belief of truthfulness of the message, trust on source and website	Awad & Ragowsky (2008), Kim, Kim & Kim(2008)
Perceived Risk	Potential loss perceived by a consumer in considering the purchase of travel online	Amaro & Duarte (2015)
Intention to Purchase online	The willingness to purchase a product online in the future	Doh & Hwang (2009), Park & Kim (2008), Amaro & Duarte (2015)
Purchase	The actual purchase made by consumer	Wee, Isamil, & Ishak (2014)

6.2 Methodology

6.2.1. Research Design

This is a Descriptive research based on Survey technique.

6.2.2. Hypotheses

The study will be carried out in order to test the following hypotheses. The hypotheses for the study are designed on the basis of previous studies and relevant literature.

6.2.2.1 Review Valence and Review Credibility.

Review valence explains the positive or negative message expressed in consumer reviews. Positive WOM occurs when favourable reviews are expressed while critical message in consumer reviews results into negative WOM. Doh and Hwang (2009) found that message contained in the consumer review affects the credibility of consumer reviews. In context of travel industry, the valences of traveler reviews are found to significantly impact online sales of hotel rooms. Ye Q., Law, Gu and Chen (2011) found that a 10 percent increase in the ratings of user reviews can boost the index of online hotel bookings, by more than five percent while study conducted by Purnawiran, Eisend, Pelsmacker and Dens (2015) produced contradictory results. They found no significant effect of review valence on perceived review usefulness and credibility of reviews, but influence of review valence on purchase intention was found to be significant. When considering hotel reviews, positive reviews are considered to improve hotel attitude which in turn increases the credibility (Vermeulen & Seegers, 2008). A positive impact on hotel awareness and on hotel attitude should yield a strong positive impact on hotel consideration (Priester et al., 2004). In contrast, negative reviews presumably have a positive effect on hotel awareness and a negative effect on hotel attitude; when occurring together, both effects might balance each other out. Therefore, it is considered that-

H_1: Exposure to positive online hotel reviews improves review credibility.

6.2.2.2 Visual information and Review Credibility.

Visual information means the presence of pictures, videos, travel related information in visual form. It is also known as visual eWOM. In travel context, it might be of high importance. When a consumer reads consumer reviews for booking of a hotel room, pictures may aid him for making decision. All such information has found to influence potential credibility of consumer review

(Filieri, Alguezaui, & McLeay, 2015), but visual cues were not found to explain changes in product sales (Davis & Khazanchi, 2008). Thus it is hypothesized that-

H_2: Visual information is positively related to review credibility.

6.2.2.3 Review Length and Review Credibility

Length of review represents the number of characters used in explaining a given review. Long reviews provide a detailed description about a product or service. Review length is found to improve the credibility of eWOM (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006) and was found to positively affect review persuasiveness (Zhang, Craciun, & Shin, 2010). Therefore it is hypothesized that- lengthy reviews improve sales.

H_3: Review Length is positively related to review credibility.

6.2.2.4 Argument Quality and Review Credibility

According to Park, Lee & Han (2007) the quality of online consumer reviews is an important element that affects the consumer cognitive information processing. Travel is a product that people enjoy reading and talking about, and travel opinion leaders look for opportunities to share their experiences with others (Litvin, Goldsmith, & Pan, 2008). The argument quality is found important while evaluating incoming communications and is associated with the quality of the received information (Cheung, Luo, Sia, & Chen, 2009). Argument quality is found to significantly influence perceived eWOM credibility (Cheung et al., 2009). Therefore, a consumer review, perceived as having valid arguments, will probably be considered by other tourists as valid information. Therefore it is hypothesized that-

H_4: Argument quality is positively related to review credibility.

6.2.2.5 Review Credibility and Intention to Purchase Online

WOM affects consumer purchasing behavior significantly (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006).

Review valence is found to effect purchase intention (Doh & Hwang, 2009; Berger, 2014). In travel context, it has been found that online user reviews have significant impact on online booking of hotel (Ye, Law, & Gu, 2009). Therefore, it is hypothesized that -

H_5: Review credibility is positively related to intention to purchase online.

6.2.2.6 Intention to Purchase Online and Purchase

Wee, Isamil and Ishak (2014) found that purchase intention affects the probability of a consumer's decision to buy. While considering booking of a hotel room, the traveler may develop an intention (or decline) to book a hotel after reading the reviews for the hotel. This finding is consistent with Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991) which says that there is a direct relation between intention and behaviour. Therefore, it is hypothesized that-

H_6: Intention to purchase online is positively related to purchase.

6.2.2.7 Moderating role of trust on relationship of consumer reviews and consumer behaviour

The consumer is believed to be rational in nature. Consumer's behavior is guided by his belief, cognition and characteristics. Since the reader has only limited knowledge and trust on the author of an on-line articulation on an opinion platform, as compared to the source of traditional of word of mouth, the quality of the contribution or the reader's experiences on having read other contributions can be expected to serve as a potent moderator of the articulation-behavior relationship (Henning- Thurau, 2002). Trust has statistical significant impact on intentions to purchase travel online (Amaro & Duarte, 2015) . Therefore, it is hypothesized that-

H_7: Trust moderates the effect of review credibility on intention to purchase online.

6.2.2.8 Moderating role of Perceived Risk on relationship of Consumer Reviews and Consumer Behaviour

When a traveler plans to book a hotel room online after considering reviews, still he may feel it risky

to book online due to several factors like risk of sharing banking details, money refund problem etc. Thus perceived risk may prevent consumers from purchasing travel online since it negatively influences intentions (Amaro & Duarte, 2015). Therefore, it is hypothesized that-

$H_{8:}$ Perceived risk moderates the effect of review credibility on intention to purchase online.

6.2.3 Scope of Study

The study focuses on consumers who are internet users (above 18 years of age). It covers all those consumers, who search on internet before making a purchase or at least have an intention to do so and consider eWOM in their decision making.

6.2.4 Sampling design

As the sample frame is wide and consists of heterogeneous population, the sample will be selected by two methods to minimize the possibility of bias- Purposive sampling and Snowball sampling.

1. Purposive Sampling: Purposive sampling will be used at the first stage to target the respondents using online questionnaire distribution, as the respondents so chosen will be able to provide specific knowledge about topic of study.
2. Snowball sampling: At the second stage, snowball sampling will be used to reach the population which is not readily accessible and hard to find.

   The method of online questionnaire distribution (Amaro & Duarte, 2015) for collecting random samples and snowball sampling using electronic mail (Goyette et al., 2010) has already been tested for e-services context.

6.2.4.1 Sample frame

The sample units for the given study will comprise of adults who have purchased travel using eTravel websites or read reviews before making a travel decision. Howsoever no such list of travelers or online users is available; it is not possible to select sample elements from the population directly.

Still to facilitate the process of research, the sample frame will be drawn from facebook pages of eTravel websites like Goibibo, Yatra.com, Tripadvisor etc; users of websites like Tripadvisor, Holiday IQ etc will be selected.

6.2.4.2 Sample size

The population from which sample needs to be drawn is infinite in nature. Therefore, sample size has been calculated using sample size formula for infinite population through precision rate and confidence level approach to arrive at a representative number of respondents (Godden, 2004).

Where, SS= Sample size for infinite population (more than 50,000)
Z= Z value
p= Population proportion
C = Margin of Error at 5% (0.05)

In order to minimize the bias and obtain realistic sample size, three scenarios are evaluated-

Scenario I Estimating 10% of population with 6% Margin of Error
Scenario II Estimating 30% of population with 5% Margin of Error
Scenario III Estimating 50% of population with 4% Margin of Error

Table 4. Calculation of Sample Size

Scenario	Population proportion	Value of Z (95% confidence level)	Margin of Error	Sample Size Calculation	Sample Size
I	10%	1.96	0.06	$SS = \frac{1.96^2 \; x \; 0.1(1-0.1)}{0.06^2}$	96
II	30%	1.96	0.05	$SS = \frac{1.96^2 \; x \; 0.3(1-0.3)}{0.05^2}$	323
III	50%	1.96	0.04	$SS = \frac{1.96^2 \; x \; 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.04^2}$	600
				Total	1019
				Average	340

Therefore the sample size for the study will be 340. Since we are using snowball sampling as well as purposive sampling using social media, we are flexible for a larger response as well.

6.2.5 Sources of Data Collection

Both primary and secondary methods of data collection will be used.

6.2.5.1 Primary Data

To collect first hand data from consumers of online travel purchase, primary data will be collected using self administered questionnaire. The questionnaire will be designed using electronic platform and will be distributed online via Social networking websites, Electronic mail, Linkedin and Whats App etc. Social media will be used to propagate questionnaire among relevant target population using purposive sampling and further data will be collected using snowball sampling. Consumers who purchase travel online are diversely spread so it is difficult to track them personally. Therefore online survey is used as by this method the researcher is sure to reach target (sample control) and that respondents are quicker to respond than traditional surveys like mall intercepts or in-home interviews. Online sample survey is also cheaper than other methods of data collection (Malhotra, 2010). Since the study focuses on online travel shopping, it was not necessary to address the concerns of individuals that do not have access to internet.

6.2.5.2 Secondary Data

With respect to the dynamic nature of the research, the researcher will be using Websites, Market Research Reports, Books, Magazines, Journals, Blogs, Other published and unpublished sources for collection of secondary data.

6.2.6 Statistical Tools

To test the given hypotheses and survey findings scientifically, researcher will analyze the data by using appropriate statistical tools. As the model is based on assumed theory, the testing will be done using PLS SEM. The assessment of model fit will be done by evaluating Indicator reliability, Internal consistency, Convergent validity and Discriminant validity. The evaluation of

hypothesis will be done by measuring Standardised Beta Coefficients, p- values and t- values. The demographical analysis will be done by using descriptive statistics in appropriate statistical software. Before preparing questionnaire a focus group study will be conducted to facilitate the process of designing questionnaire. A structured questionnaire will be prepared which will be surveyed using pilot study to check its reliability and any amendment which would be felt necessary will be made in the final questionnaire before administering it to respondents.

6.2.7 Implications of the Study

This study provides both practical and theoretical implication. The role of eWOM has been recognized by several researchers and is also very popular now-a-days among marketers. From Business and Management perspective, the study will have implications for both marketers and designers of e-commerce websites in terms of how to manage online consumer reviews. It will also help them understand how message contained in consumer reviews affects the consumer buying behaviour. Study will conclude the results in a meaningful way and suggestions will be proposed that can help marketers in deriving quality reviews from users and moderating the reviews to give a balance to the reviews.

7. PROPOSED CHAPTERIZATION

The structure of the proposed study will be as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Suggestions

Annexure: Synthesized Matrix

S. No.	Author	Area of Literature			Variables of Study									Research Approach					Level of Study		Details	
		eWOM	Travel	Consumer reviews	Review Valence	Visual Information	Length of Review	Review Credibility	Argument Quality	Trust	Perceived Risk	Intention to buy	Purchase	Experimental	Conceptual	Empirical	Laboratory Study	Econometric Analysis	Market Level	Consumer Level	Theory used	Summary
1	Amaro & Duarte(2015)	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓			✓					✓	Theory of Planned Behaviour, Technology Acceptance Model, Information diffusion Theory	Study of eWOM variables on consumer purchase intetntion towards booking of travel.
2	Awad & Ragowsk(2011)	✓							✓	✓						✓				✓		Focuses on the cultural effect of gender on the relationship of online word of mouth and trust in e-commerce.
3	Berger(2014)	✓													✓							Summaraised various variables under one roof and provides directions for future research.
4	Buttle(1998)	✓			✓										✓							Literature review and comparative study of traditional WOM and eWOM.
5	Cheung & Lee(2012)	✓														✓					Social Pshychology & Social Cognitive Theory	Identification and study on Antecents to eWOM.
6	Cheung & Thadani(2012)	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓						Theory of Communication	Analysis of Literature based on Communication Theory by considering literature under 4 heads- stimulus, response, message and communicator.Prepositions for future research are also proposed.
7	Cheung & Thadani(2010)	✓													✓						Theory of Communication	Analysis and critical evaluation of variables under study in ewom.Finding and filetring from 390 reviews .

S. No.	Author	Area of Literature			Variables of Study									Research Approach					Level of Study		Details	
		eWOM	Travel	Consumer reviews	Review Valence	Visual Information	Length of Review	Review Credibility	Argument Quality	Trust	Perceived Risk	Intention to buy	Purchase	Experimental	Conceptual	Empirical	Laboratory Study	Econometric Analysis	Market Level	Consumer Level	Theory used	Summary
8	Cheung,Lee & Rabhjohn(2008)	✓		✓					✓												Dual process Theory	Study of factors affecting information adoption of online opinion seekers in online customer communities.
9	Chevlaier & Mayzlin(2006)	✓		✓	✓											✓		✓	✓			Customer word of mouth affects consumer purchasing behavior
10	Chung, Lo, Sia & Chen(2009)	✓						✓								✓				✓	Dual process Theory	Study on effect of Informational determinants and Normative determinants on eWom credibility.
11	Davis Khazanchi(2008)	✓			✓	✓										✓			✓			Develped a model on attributes of online WOM that can be used to predict e-commerce sale.
12	Doh & Hwan(2009)	✓			✓			✓				✓				✓				✓		Study measured negativity effect. It was found that few negative messages can be helpful in promoting positive attitude toward Web site and credibility of eWOM messages.
13	Fan et al.(2013)	✓						✓	✓							✓				✓	Elaboration Likelihood Model	The study studied factors that influence a consumer's perceived eWOM credibility and the importance of credibility in affecting a consumer's adoption of eWOM.
14	Filieri et al.(2015)	✓	✓	✓					✓													Study of impact of Trust towards a CGM website influences travel consumers intention.
15	Goyette et al.(2010)	✓			✓				✓							✓						Development of Standard scale to measure eWOM in service context
16	Gretzel & Yoo(2008)	✓	✓	✓				✓								✓				✓		Study of eTravel website, TripAdvisor to investigate how effect of travellers reviews on trip planning process and effect of demographics.

S. No.	Author	Area of Literature			Variables of Study										Research Approach					Level of Study		Details	
		eWOM	Travel	Consumer reviews	Review Valence	Visual Information	Length of Review	Review Credibility	Argument Quality	Trust	Perceived Risk	Intention to buy	Purchase		Experimental	Conceptual	Empirical	Laboratory Study	Econometric Analysis	Market Level	Consumer Level	Theory used	Summary
17	Henning-Thurau(2003)	✓		✓													✓				✓		The findings of this research demonstrate that customer articulations on opinion platforms influence consumer decision-making. Buying Information is the strongest motive for reading consmer reviews
18	Henning-Thurau et al.(2004)	✓		✓													✓				✓	Social Interaction Utility	Study on reasons for which people talk online and categorisation of consumers according to motives.
19	Hung & Li(2007)	✓														✓							Study concluded that eWOM has different effects on informed and uninformed customer
20	Jansane et al(2009)	✓								✓		✓					✓			✓			Study of effect of ewom in twitter on brand
21	Julia & Pan(2007)	✓	✓					✓							✓						✓		The study found eWOM to be less credible than traditional wom
22	Kim, Kim, Kim(2009)	✓								✓							✓				✓	Justice Theory of Adams	Study of effect of justice on satisfaction with service recovery and effects on trust, WOM, and revisit intention.
23	Lee & Koo(2012)	✓						✓									✓					Regulatory Focus Theory	The study found showed that objective information produces moderating effect of valence and attributes on consumer's subjective knowledge.
24	Lee & Lee(2009)	✓										✓					✓			✓		Subjectivity– Objectivity Dichotomy	Examined the impact of eWOM on customer purchase intention to determine the effect of product information on the customers' online purchasing process.

S. No.	Author	Area of Literature			Variables of Study									Research Approach					Level of Study		Details	
		eWOM	Travel	Consumer reviews	Review Valence	Visual Information	Length of Review	Review Credibility	Argument Quality	Trust	Perceived Risk	Intention to buy	Purchase	Experimental	Conceptual	Empirical	Laboratory Study	Econometric Analysis	Market Level	Consumer Level	Theory used	Summary
25	Lee, Park & Han(2007)	✓		✓	✓									✓							Estimation Likelihood Model	This study investigates the effects of negative online consumer reviews on consumer product attitude.
26	Lopes, Jose Luis, & Elisabeth(2014)	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓						✓						Dual process Theory	A study on review credibility, where , when and why tourist write reviews
27	Breazeale(2009)	✓													✓							Literature Review on ewom
28	Moneya & Crotts(2002)		✓													✓						Study on how uncertainty avoidance influenced search behavior, trip planning, travel party characteristics, and trip characteristics.
29	Park & Kim(2008)	✓		✓										✓							Cognitive fit theory , ELM Model	Type of reviews can be a key moderating variable to explain the inconsistent relationship between consumer expertise and WOM.
30	Purnaviran et al.(2015)	✓		✓	✓			✓				✓		✓								Meta analysis to measure influence of online review valence on purchase intention, credibility, attitude, and moderators such as valence,brand familiarity.
31	R.A. King et al.(2014)	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓						Neilsons framework	Summarising of literature on the basis of antecedents and consequences to sender and consumers.
32	Wong& Sheng(2012)	✓													✓						System Dynamics Approach	Word of Mouth is recursive in nature. Consumers read eWOM and generate after use.
33	Sen & Lerman(2007)	✓		✓	✓												✓			✓		Study of impact of ewom on utilitarian vs hedonic product.
34	Litvin,Goldsmith & Pan(2008)	✓	✓												✓							This paper describes eWOM, as a potentially cost-effective means for marketing hospitality and tourism.

S. No.	Author	Area of Literature			Variables of Study									Research Approach					Level of Study		Details	
		eWOM	Travel	Consumer reviews	Review Valence	Visual Information	Length of Review	Review Credibility	Argument Quality	Trust	Perceived Risk	Intention to buy	Purchase	Experimental	Conceptual	Empirical	Laboratory Study	Econometric Analysis	Market Level	Consumer Level	Theory used	Summary
35	Vermulean & Seagers(2008)	✓	✓	✓	✓									✓					✓			To assess the moderating influence of review valence, hotel familiarity, and reviewer expertise on the within-subject effect of online hotel reviews on consumer awareness, attitudes, and consideration of hotels.
36	Wee, Ismail, Ishak(2014)												✓							✓	Theory of Planned Behaviour	Purchase behaviour of consumer was measured in organic food buying.
37	Ye, Law, Gu(2008)	✓	✓					✓								✓			✓			Results suggest that online user reviews have an important impact on online hotel sales.
38	Ye et al.(2010)	✓	✓													✓			✓			Traveler reviews were found to have significant impact on online sales, with a 10 percent increase in traveler review ratings, online bookings boostup by more than five percent.
39	Zhang, Craciun, Shin (2010.a)	✓		✓	✓												✓		✓		Regulatory focus Theory	Study of effects of WOM valence on persuasiveness.Consumption goals that consumers associate with the reviewed product were found to moderate the effect of review valence on persuasiveness.
40	Zhang, Craciun, Shin(2010.b)	✓			✓												✓		✓			Study to find when consumers consider eWOM.

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